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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the concept of mutual adaptation in the process of information transfer for school improvement. The analysis is based on the experiences of technical assistance teams of the Documentation and Technical Assistance Project (Chicago, Illinois), which sought to link research and practice by helping schools to improve their problem solving capacities through the use of information from nine school improvement projects. Mutual adaptation in information transfer is described as the continuous altering of new information to fit the intellectual organization of the information recipient, and the concomitant restructuring of the recipient's intellectual organization to accommodate the structure of the new information. The paper examines experiences in mutual adaptation in the process of transferring information from the nine sites to other schools, from the perspectives of information offerers and recipients. The influences on mutual adaptation of collective groups (such as the staff who receive information and assistance, principals of recipient schools, and district administrations) are also analyzed. It is suggested that successful information transfer and utilization for school improvement greatly depends on the presence of mutual perception and acceptance between information offerers (or technical assistance groups) and recipients.
(Author/MJL)

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MUTUAL ADAPTATION: USING OUTSIDE
INFORMATION IN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

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Hannah Meara,
Chicago Associates for Social Research

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Documentation and Technical Assistance in Urban Schools Project (DTA) is an effort to learn more about how to make urban public schools work better for urban students. Toward this end, DTA combines educational research and practice within one project. DTA's mandate has three inter-related parts:

DOCUMENTATION - to study, using primarily ethnographic techniques, the ways in which selected urban schools organize themselves to solve problems. Documentation focuses upon nine sites throughout the country selected and funded by NIE to continue to engage in locally initiated improvement activities.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE - to develop in practice specific strategies which are designed to improve urban public schooling. Technical assistance strategies are based in part upon documentation of useful practices in the nine funded sites.

LINKAGE - to increase understanding, through observation of DTA's attempts to link documentation with technical assistance, of the processes through which research can be useful to practice, and practice can influence research.

This study is a product of the documentation effort. The ideas, commitment, hard work, successes and disappointments of the people directly working within urban schools on a day-to-day basis are in a very real sense the base of DTA. It is our hope that this description and analysis will be useful to researchers, policy planners and particularly to the people who work directly in schools in their efforts to improve the quality and validity of the educational experiences for urban students.

Thomas A. Wilson
DTA Project Director

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Observing the educational change efforts of several technical assistance groups working in urban public schools throughout the United States, members of a research team reported time and again how unproductive in contrast to their goals were their experiences. Nowhere were suggested innovative practices accepted as offered and, more often than not, offerings of information about such practices fell upon seemingly deaf ears. Where offerings of information about practices were used, research team members noted that the processes were characterized by mutual adaptation, referring to the Rand (e.g. Greenwood, et al., 1975: vii) analysis of such processes in certain Federally funded educational change projects. Greenwood and his colleagues express the concept and the experience in the following way:

...we found that implementation was essentially an organizational process of mutual adaptation between the project design and the institutional setting, and that implementation strategies had a significant effect on the project outcomes. Implementation was most successful when based on strategies that fostered mutual adaptation and permitted it to take place, specifically: on-line planning efforts and continuing reassessment of project methods; provision of extensive pre-service and in-service training for all participants; frequent, regular meetings of project personnel to discuss problems and share ideas; and the local development of project materials, as opposed to the utilization of commercially prepared packages. This latter activity provided an opportunity to "learn by doing" as well as a sense of identification with the project's goals and understanding of its precepts (p.vii).

Their case studies of change projects describe the mutual adaptation process as it is played out in a variety of schools and with a number of very different change strategies.

Regarding processes by which mutual adaptation occurs, Berman and MacLaughlin (1977a) write:

In terms of individual classrooms, the process consists of each teacher developing new methods and practices while adjusting the project design to classroom conditions: it is essentially "learning by doing". Effective implementation strategies foster mutual adaptation by providing each teacher with necessary and timely feedback, allowing project-level choices to be made to correct errors, and encouraging commitment to the project.

But, they warn, this mutual adaptation process may not be followed by rote for it must be a genuinely mutually adaptative process for implementation to occur.

Emrick (1977), in his evaluation of the National Diffusion Network, gives numerous reports of mutual adaptation in which teacher adopters of educational innovations and other developers of those innovations, interacting to apply the innovation, achieve a result which is neither wholly like the teacher's previous practice nor like the developer's previous innovation. The very positive nature of his evaluation of the Network has to do with the presence of mutual adaptation, of relationships which result in applications of innovations in schools.

Viewing reports from the research team and in the literature we were led in two directions. Our belief that this process of adaptation is essential to humans' taking in and using truly new ideas and practices led us to search the literatures of various disciplines for their heritage of insights into the nature of this process (Meara, 1980). At the same time we studied project documentary materials and interviewed a number of technical assis-

tance and school staff members in order to test with their experiences our developing view of the mutual adaptation process. Our exploratory efforts convince us that mutual adaptation is, indeed, a concept with a depth of conceptual support and validation from various disciplines and that the concept helps us understand the various outcomes of encounters between technical assistance groups and various members of urban public school staffs throughout the country. The purpose of this paper is to present the results of the conceptual and empirical explorations using data on interaction processes from the projects as examples.

Mutual Adaptation: A Series of Nested Concepts.

The particular kind of mutual adaptation process on which this paper focuses attention is the relationship between individual and collective representatives of technical assistance groups and of urban public schools and related parent groups. The mutual adaptation process is build conceptually out of its component processes of individual and collective adaptation and of their mutual reinforcement. We build our conceptualization from Piaget's (1954; Flavell, 1963) definition of adaptation as consisting of the two processes of assimilation and accommodation. For Piaget, assimilation refers to the process wherein external objects are structured or restructured so that they fit into the ongoing intellectual organization of the individual. Accommodation, in complement, refers to the process wherein the indivi-

dual's intellectual organization itself changes to make room for the shape and nature of the external object. We apply this conceptualization similarly to collectivities such as technical assistance groups, schools, and school systems, calling collective adaptation the process by which groups change to adopt a new form of structure of organization, practice, or belief and in so doing, also change that new form. The following scheme, taken from our earlier paper (Meara, 1980:12), shows the structural similarity of individual and collective adaptation:

The Adaptation Process

	<u>Individual</u>	<u>Collective</u>
<u>Assimilation</u>	Individuals take in new information in terms of ongoing thought patterns	Collectivities take in new information and/or structural patterns in terms of ongoing patterns
<u>Accommodation</u>	Individuals' ongoing thought patterns change to incorporate the shape of the new information.	Collectivities' structural patterns change to incorporate the shape of new information or structural patterns

But, calling attention to these parallel processes is merely a first step, for these processes are essentially interdependent or mutually reinforcing. Individual adaptation takes place more readily within a collectivity which habitually adapts and which supports individual adaptation. Adaptation of collectivities is

facilitated by the presence within them of individuals who readily assimilate and accommodate to new information and practices. Most basically,

Adaptation is a process relating an entity and an environment. The entity is presumed to have an internal structure to which features of the environment can be assimilated and which itself is capable of change. If the entity is an individual, then part of its structure may be determined by certain collectivities in which it is nested. Conversely, if the entity is itself a collectivity its structure may be determined, at least in part, by the individuals of which it is composed. Mutual adaptation occurs as a process relating two (or more) entities, each of which provides part of a changing environment to which the other(s) adapt (Meara, 1980: 35).

Mutual adaptation is, then, a process endemic to human interaction, whether individual or collective. Whenever information is truly exchanged and thoughtways and practices are altered, then mutual adaptation, at least between the information recipient and the information in its offered form, has occurred. This, then, is the conceptualization which has been partially formed by and will be used in the next section to describe certain educational change efforts.

Mutual Adaptation: The Experiences of Several Groups.

We are here reporting the experiences of several technical assistance groups with offering information on practices (skills, techniques, practice frameworks), which they believe will improve educational experiences, to members of urban public school staffs and to parents. Most of the encounters of this type which were documented in these projects were unproductive in terms of useful

information exchange. Some encounters in a few projects were characterized by mutual adaptation in that both offerers and recipients of information about practices took in information from the other which facilitated its use in a new context. These more and less successful processes will be described next using illustrations from several of the groups. Then we will describe influences of collective environments on adaptation processes or attempts at their achievement.

In terms of our conceptual understanding of these processes we focus attention on the extent to which the basic resources for mutual adaptation were present, in particular the following: From the perspective of information recipients, the degree to which

1. they have a picture in their minds of a person or a group of people offering them information;
2. the particular people offering the information or people of their social types have appeal to them as offerers of potentially useful information;
3. they have a picture in their minds of the information being offered;
4. the information being offered has appeal to them as potentially useful.

From the perspective of information offerers, the degree to which

1. they have a picture in their minds of the recipients and their experiential needs for improving practice;
2. they respect the recipients as people with a valid set of perspectives on their relevant experiences;
3. they approach the recipients in terms of their felt needs or their abilities to make appropriate judgements about how to use information;

4. they are deeply knowledgeable and experienced with what they are offering.

Each of these resources is especially crucial in the initial stages of interaction between people from technical assistance groups and from schools. When they are not present, interaction sustained enough for information exchange does not occur, as the following example from the work of participants of a school within a school (site 2) assisted by members of an assistance group illustrates. One of the project members, referring to their early efforts to involve community residents in the development of their school, writes the following about a workshop which they had worked hard to promote:

We were going to spend the day discussing the new high school and then have a big celebration in a local schoolyard. Well, only about nine people showed up. It was a big disaster, but it taught us something. We had nothing concrete to offer at the time. Nothing people could relate to. All they saw was another hustle...(quoted in Paoli, 1978:9).

Similarly unproductive processes occurred in a model teacher center (site 5) which was developed for public school teachers by attempting to replicate a teacher center which had been very successful in another section of the same city. This unfortunate site is perhaps an extreme example in that teachers had no clear notion of what its purposes were. Beyond its activity of funding individual teachers' projects, it had no effective contact with teachers. Much in the work of these two groups illustrates the importance of the most elementary components of the mutual adaptation process: pictures of offerers and recipients, each in

the minds of the others. But these basic resources are not only important at the point of initiation of interaction. They continue to be important throughout the interaction processes for whenever new information is offered to be taken in, such resources are necessary. They must exist or be renewed for the mutual adaptation process to continue.

This next section will describe examples of experiences with basic resources for mutual adaptation first from the perspective of recipients and then of offerers of information. Each list of resources as a whole serves as a guide to this presentation.

Information recipients experiences

Two examples from the model teacher center (site 5) stand out to illustrate problems with useful information exchange. Few of the interactions of staff persons of this site had productive results. One interchange that was relatively successful was seen to be so in terms of the recipient's experience of the relevance of his background for the topic:

Ted made an effort to use the STC to deliver visible services to the school staff because he saw that as one of the appropriate functions of the STC. His activities included arranging to have sample teaching materials displayed at the Center and sponsoring a film on child abuse. His choice of the film on child abuse was consistent with his background as a social worker.*

But often their offerings of information were not visible to school staff members. In another instance, teacher center board members had an opportunity to be recipients of information when they traveled to a distant city to observe the efforts of some other technical assistance groups. Following is their

*All names which are references to project participants and organizations are pseudonyms.

reaction to the trip:

The reactions of the board to the trip were similar to the observations that the board members often had when visiting other projects. They felt that the things that they saw in other cities were interesting and often successful. Yet, the main impression was usually that the Iroquois City Schools had more resources and were more successful and progressive than other schools that they visited.

One cannot argue with their impression, for it was possibly true. But it points to the complex factors that enter into any process of acquiring new information. Here they did not approach their observations in terms of a solution to some problems they were encountering in their own group. Most projects outside of their own city were, in their view, not likely to offer information which they could use.

In contrast, a teacher in the school within a school (site 2) describes an experience with visiting other schools:

I took a trip up to...and looked at their high school. The secretary of the school at that time came and two other teachers. We went up there to see their models. We did make some outreach, but not enough. There's never enough. We never see enough models in action and that's one of the problems I have with information dissemination and reading about models without seeing the model and talking to the people who live in the model.

She approaches such a trip from a perspective of the probability of acquiring potentially useful information and from particularly appealing offerers: the people who live in the model.

An assistance group (site 4) which offered teachers in two urban elementary schools information about the cultural backgrounds of their pupils in order to bridge the discontinuity between their worlds met with a great deal of resistance from teachers because

neither the projected kinds of activities nor the staff people who would lead them were appealing. Teachers were not interested in the broad political issues that the group wished to address; their concerns had much more to do with day-to-day professional issues that group staff did not wish to address. When group staff members presented educational problems as part of wider community problems and suggested that teachers make efforts to solve those problems their offerings were rejected. More successful were their later efforts to offer programs by acknowledged experts on issues having to do with childhood education and child rearing. Smith (1979:60) compares the two approaches:

When it came to providing expert workshop services, something that the teachers saw as immediately useful in their work, they found the project useful and cooperated with it. When it came to the more indirect, less immediately useful and perhaps even more professionally threatening job of identifying and dealing with underlying problems, the staff tended to resist.

One of the parents commented on the benefits of those information exchanges:

The teacher trainers...they really did something. You could see they were beginning to talk to parents, to talk to teachers. Before the parents blamed the teachers and the teachers blamed the parents. We were getting real close in those sessions. I think they did a lot of good.

Attractive offerers of information on potentially useful topics opened up interaction and some information exchange took place.

School staff members' reactions to qualifications of offerers of information were an important component of the relatively greater success of the later offerings of this group. Talking

about one of the group's trainers, the person said:

...she started getting people to come in and get in-service training to teachers about the problems she conceived inner city children raised in our area...she brought in doctors, psychologists, probation people and that kind of thing. And they were helpful (Smith, 1979: 58).

Another teacher agreed with the assistant principal's assessment of those programs and also spoke of another project trainer who "presented some interesting speakers from Benjamin Bannaker Hospital and different places" (ibid.).

School staff members also made a distinction between the qualifications of the principal investigator of the assistance project and its director, addressing them also with differential respect. Smith, the author of a case study on this group, wrote the following:

Dr. Prince has a Ph.D. in psychology and the school subculture finds credentials absolutely imperative. Henry had none of these forms of credentials. Prince spoke as an academic, Henry as a grass roots activist. Prince was charismatic, able to stir people to immediate responses; Henry was low-key, depending on argument to persuade people...Prince was associated in people's minds with the practice of clinical psychology and Benjamin Bannaker Hospital. Henry's associations were with the Afro-American School Development Council, which was seen as an anti-school organization and not too effective.

Smith found no evidence that the project director was unable to administer the project but, instead, that the difference in their backgrounds was striking and negatively affected recipients who had greater respect for Dr. Prince's kind of competence.

Speaking of problems with consultants and qualities he appreciates in outsiders, an administrator at one of the elementary schools touches on an important issue in the teachers' reactions

to members of this group:

They were here to find problems and aggrandize their names, I felt. There are a lot of possibilities because we at the school site are so busy with student problems and other things and just keeping what we got going, that many times we do not have the time and energy to invest in bringing in resources which could be helpful. There aren't just enough man hours available. Somebody who could be supportive and wanted to come and help us, make referrals, help us become aware of things we could refer to could be of great help.

Having already too much to do, school staff members cannot take another drain on their personal resources. Outsiders who enter with positive assumptions about school staff members, who appreciate the difficult conditions and circumstances within which they work, and who pitch in and offer help are seen as more appealing and their information more acceptable than those who do not have these qualities.

In most of the projects competence was described, at least in part, as having to do with formal or university derived qualifications. The Principal of a large city experimental high school (site 9) which emphasized collaborative decision making among all participants and one of their consultants stand out as having appeal to information recipients because of competence and deeply held knowledge. Montesano (1978:83), the author of a case study of that site, quotes a teacher as saying about the Principal: "Abraham is very good at projecting an image. That image gets people to work." The Principal himself, finding certain talents lacking within the school, sought experienced outside consultants through an agency which describes itself in

the following way:

Face-to-Face acts as a problem solving tool, identifying, mobilizing and managing academic talents to be of specific and creative use to public agencies. Since its inception in 1974, Face-to-Face has performed technical assistance and management services for a variety of agencies, lending its in-house expertise and that of the university community to the resolution of a wide range of problems (Montesano, 1978: 91).

So, too, in a project which worked to increase teachers' participation in local school decision making through the formation of faculty councils and school constitutions (site 3) made much use of a written evaluation of their activities which was done by a research institute of a nationally respected university. On numerous occasions the contents, as well as the source of the evaluation were quoted by project members.

An organization of people in business who provided organizational development consultation to improve the quality of education in the public schools of a major American city were also received, in part, in terms of their qualifications. Davis (1978), describing the experiences of that site (1), refers to the use of a "nationally noted consultant in the area of Peer Counseling" and a project consultant who "served as an experienced resource person due to his own directorship of an 'alternative school'" (p. 169). The director of the organization, too, has formal qualifications which were seen to be related to this effectiveness:

Gray's formal academic training is in the fields of Political Science and Economics (Ph.D. University of Minnesota). He has also served as a university professor and as a member of the legislature of a midwestern state. He feels that his past experience with Organizational Development has been most important in giving him the skills he needs to direct the Self-Improvement Program (p.173).

The two kinds of qualifications, formal training and experiential, are emphasized in this and other projects.

The Director of a university based group which offers on site and its own laboratory center experiences with open education to urban public school teachers is always described in terms of her competence and deeply held relevant knowledge to the extent that she becomes for purposes of this analysis the ideal typical offerer of information. One of the staff members of this group describes her earlier experience with having sought her out to take one of her university courses:

She was more than I could have ever believed. I mean, the woman read. She had at her fingertips a tremendous amount just to give you. She opened up your whole mind. You walked out of that class having something to think about. First thing I did was to take her bibliography and run out and bought all the books and started reading. They were all interesting stuff. She had preselected stuff that made a lot of sense and stuff that really could help a teacher.

Following her participation in the Director's course at the university, this person applied what she had learned in her own classroom and joined the staff of the assistance group (site 8). In our interview with her she continued to describe the Director's competence and to relate it to effects in classrooms:

She is a wonder woman, aside from the fact that she's a very nice person and caring. She has so much to give and so much knowledge in so many areas political and otherwise. We all understand that she's got the educational know-how and the commitment and the ability to translate this commitment into something as concrete as she has. When I tell friends about what goes on in this school, in my classroom, they don't believe me.

She also describes another project staff member's success in a

city school, crediting her extensive knowledge and experience within that school and its surrounding community. She said:

She has the information. She has tremendous information on the school. She's really worked in that school, in that community for years. And that's what a good adviser does is really get to know not only the teachers. Also the parents, the paraprofessionals, the student teacher, the principal, the people in the neighborhood so we not only help an individual teacher directly but we try to bring resources or get her in contact with other resources that will support her development.

Working with more experienced project staff members is important to new staff members in their training. One person describes her experiences in the following way:

...I also trained at...(naming other schools within which the project works) and then I went to...(a school outside the district) and worked with...(a former project staff member). It was the most fantastic training I received anywhere, working with experienced (staff people) like...(naming three), visiting other schools...

Knowledge based competence, then, is no superficial matter to teachers in urban public schools and those who learn to offer them assistance. To be useful and used by teachers in urban public schools, the offerers of information must know a great deal of theoretical and practical information; they must know the general ideas that can be applied and all the very many specific and practical bits of information that are necessary for the accomplishment of new pieces of work.

Information offerers' experiences

Information offerers in the various sites spread throughout the country varied widely in their experiences with making appro-

priate contact with school staff members they were to assist and their needs and experiences. They also varied in the degree to which the assistance they offered was something about which they were deeply knowledgeable and experienced. The more competent they were in the areas of their offerings, the more able they were to work to tailor their offerings to meet the recipients' needs.

The teacher center (site 5) which was an attempt to replicate a center which had been successful in a culturally different section of the same city did not make contact with the felt needs of teachers in the new district. Sherlock, the site researcher, reports (1978) an endless series of meetings at which purposes of the project were considered and never clarified. Essentially the project became a filter for funds for teacher's projects, thereby functioning in the only way it could meet teacher's felt needs, rather than as a vehicle for teachers' development beyond what they individually could accomplish.

There was a problem in the organizational development work of the group of people in the field of business (site 1) with making connections between different levels of participants in the urban public schools they served. Davis, the site researcher, describes them in the following way:

The coordinators agreed that they had not been sufficiently involved with the decision making activities of the management team. One coordinator described the conflict as follows: "The underlying conflict is (with) the management team. There is a 'we-they' dichotomy and a breakdown in communication." In order to address this conflict, the participants engaged in an "imaging" exercise...As a result of

these activities, an effort was made to restructure the management of the project so that coordinators could have more involvement in decision making (1978).

Organizational Development techniques such as "survey-feedback" were commonly used within this project to attempt to address problems with insufficient connections between project work and recipients' needs and experiences.

The large city school within a school (site 2) experienced a large turnover of teaching staff which was attributed to an apparent lack of positive regard for the teaching staff on the part of those who worked with them to improve the quality of educational experiences. The site researcher, Paoli (1978), writes about this problem:

But while they exposed teachers to some substantive assistance, they have also confirmed teacher fears about the unreality of administrative expectations. Teachers believe that they were being publically demeaned for asking questions of displaying ignorance about dimensions of what is a very complicated and sophisticated task which teachers are not often called upon to perform. Instead of having their questions treated as neutral indications of a learning need or as a diagnosis (the sessions were nominally staff training sessions), they found that they were being rebuked for not already knowing what they had come to learn.

In such situations information exchange of the sort that leads to mutual adaptation is not taking place. The offerers of information are offering negative regard and are not themselves open to receiving the kinds of information which would help them achieve their goals.

A consultant to the experimental high school which emphasized collaboration among its participants (site 9) who had an excel-

lent reputation for being helpful to the school staff, stands out in terms of the positive regard he felt for them. In an interview he talked about his work with them in the following way: "I go out and listen to others and am fascinated by their concepts and theories and the way they function." His description of the work which had such a positive reputation follows:

...basically what we were trying to get them to do was to focus on what it was they wanted to do for themselves. It wasn't a question of coming in and laying on them my theory or philosophy, sense of what's good and proper. For a school like that it was really a question of helping them focus and wanting to identify with their problems. This is a kind of standard change agent role but it was a question of what were the things they were unhappy with, what were the things they wanted to change, what are the areas in which they felt they had the ability to influence some of these changes, what were the areas they felt needed additional assistance and support was before they could achieve these things. So that was where it was at. Now I don't know that I did anything more with that group than nudge and push and encourage them. Make them look at the same things in different ways of doing things...

His basic approach was to respect their motivation and their knowledge of their own work and to work with them to facilitate a positive unfolding of their abilities to solve the problems of developing their school. He makes this approach more explicit in a later statement:

If you can capitalize upon the fact...that everybody in the institution wants to do their job and has a great sense of doing the job well. And, you know the other theory says that everybody is a goof-off and if you approach people as if they're all goof-offs, then, you're going to treat them like goof-offs and they'll respond like goof-offs. If you approach people on the basis that everybody wants to get some ego satisfaction about whatever it is they do in life even if they're being nasty, capitalize upon that thing that they want to get satisfaction in.

He works out of positive regard for people because he is convinced that such an approach works to bring about change.

The Principal described in an interview the initiation of their relationship with this consultant:

(He) came in and said, "How can I help you?" The first person who ever came from a university and said this. And then we moved and got an Urban Renewal Grant... I asked (him) to teach a course in changing school organization and he was good at getting people to think of new ideas and putting them in touch with where other things were going on, et cetera. Getting them to visit schools where different things were going on. He had knowledge...had people doing interesting things come and talk...

The Principal too approached the work with his school staff in terms of their perceived needs. He said, for example:

We started with a problem: moving to a new school. We wanted to change and we read and met and reported to each other and talked about what others were doing. That was an educational process we went through together.

The Principal and the consultant had a great deal of knowledge and experience to offer the staff and so approached them with a confidence that together they could handle whatever issues would arise.

An assistance group in another city worked to effect within certain public schools a management-by-objectives approach to the solution of organizational and educational problems. The first director of this project was not so successful as the second, apparently because of her inability to present the new approach in terms of the ongoing needs and experiences of school staff members. The second director worked more effectively with one principal than with another probably because the rapport that comes from the development of mutual respect was not present.

Another reason for the relatively greater success of the second project director was, according to the author of a case study (Simon, 1978) on the group, her purposeful building into the work a solid competence about management-by-objectives. When she was new to the job and relatively inexperienced with that approach she accepted a suggestion of bringing an author of books on the subject, and acknowledged expert, in to work with the school staff members. Simon (1978) writes of the success of this approach:

His participation was crucial. The MBO process as (she) defined it took final form after (the expert) began his involvement. Several of the definitions and exercises which Josephs included in the process and as part of the training, came from (his) and (his co-author's) approach to planning (p.89).

Based upon this early work, the project director developed her own competence:

...she did not want to present herself merely as an organizer of workshops and recruiter of consultants, but as a resource on planning. She clearly set herself up as the expert in MBO in the eyes of the school staffs at all levels. As she developed her definition of MBO she worked hard to learn its skills, and to understand planning well enough to be able to instruct school staffs. She relied on consultants behind the scenes, for the most part, to advise her and help her interpret the reactions of the school staffs (p.93).

Simon describes how the project director used her knowledge of MBO in effective interaction with school staff members:

Through face-to-face interaction with (the project director), and through the interaction structured by the project strategy, the school staffs came to adopt the set of knowledges they would have to have to realize the social organization embedded in the project conception. Other ways which (the project director) structures interaction, serve to insure continued reinforcement of the learning by setting

members up to pass on the knowledge within the school...endeavored to use the natural leadership in the school whenever possible. She worked with principals to make them competent at using the process and then set them as instructors of the others in the school community. She worked with committee chairpersons and the Task Force chairperson to help them take on the leadership role with other teachers in the school. In doing this she set up a replica of what she herself did.

In addition to her developed competence in using management-by-objectives, this project director also had experience teaching in public schools which also contributed to her work. Simon quotes the Principal with whom she worked most effectively on the subject of her experience:

(Her) experience in schools has lent her a perspective on school management which is sensitive to the nature of the principal's role. (And) her skill in working with school staff without offending or overstepping bounds (1978: 77).

These descriptions of her work give a picture of someone who used her previous school experiences to bring her in touch with teachers' and principals' needs and experiences, who could then approach them directly in terms on their current problems, and who imported and developed competence in the technique being applied.

The Principal of a school (site 6) where organizational development in-service training for teachers grew into a dynamic school-community relationship, was deeply knowledgeable about humanistic education and Rogerian psychology and daily applied this knowledge in his work with staff and parents. A member of the parent group with whom he worked expressed her experience with the respect that he showed others:

He won't solve your problems for you. If I come in here with a problem, he will say, "What are you going to do about it?" He won't say, "I'll do that about it."...A lot of times (he'll tell you alternatives) but he'd rather me work through

them first. "What are some of your alternatives?" I can say, "This, this, this." and...he'll say, "Or this, this, or this." But he never completely solves the problem for you.

Much of the Principal's work was with the parents who lived in the lower socio-economic level community around the school. Assuming basic human competence, he helped them develop political and psychological skills which many would assume they were incapable of developing.

Hyde (1979: 146) describes the Principal's view of why the workshops he organized were successful:

...interpersonal trusting, allowing people to make mistakes for learning, encouraging and praising the successes of people, integrating the social aspects with the educational, and recognizing the role of sexuality in the dynamics of people's lives. The community school became under his leadership the center of a Rogerian therapeutic community for many parents...(The Principal) had said that if he had just kept the workshops in a business-like training fashion, people would have stopped coming after the second session. The social and personal enjoyment of the postworkshop festivities was an enrichment to their lives...

Wanting to provide information to a group of people who had a wide range of pressing needs beyond those having to do with the quality of the educational experiences of their children, the Principal offered what they could readily receive thereby enhancing their availability for other purposes. But the case study gives an impression of his sincere devotion to this wider range of activities in their behalf; his efforts were more than strategical.

The university based group which works with teachers on developing open educational experiences in public schools provides plentiful examples of offering information from a perspec-

tive of positive regard for the recipients, their needs, experiences, and judgements. One of the staff members of the assistance group describes the group's director in the following way:

(She) was the first assister. She was sensational. She was! She is! She used to come always in the role of participant and never in the role of "I know-you don't, the expert and never asked you to do anything but always with an understanding of what are the possibilities and what are the alternatives and "What do you think? You're the teacher and it's got to work through you." Any problems that came up she was able to not intercede but support. Support you through them, work them through herself physically. She didn't just tell you. She came in and did it. "What do you think of this? How would you feel working in a situation like this? What are your thoughts?" Of course, she was able to see through them.

The assister continues to talk, searching for an explanation of what are the effective qualities inherent in this form of assistance:

I think one of the major things you need is a generalization and that you need a nonthreatening close support. Change is impossible in a threatening situation and that was the whole unique effect of the assister's service as I am concerned in (this) city's public education. Here came somebody who knew what to do and who knew how to support you and who had no power over you and took none. There was no element of judgement and there was incredible trust which was the beautiful thing. I mean, people were allowed not to always succeed in something that they try so that you're picked up where you were.

She continued on this subject later in the same interview:

...Our strengths were supported the way she wanted you to work with children. It was really a kind of modeling. It was noticing, you know, looking around the room listening to what we said, what we had to say, and picking up on our strengths, and all the assisters have done this since then. This is their entree'.

It's: what are your strengths? And how can we stand on those and how can we build on this? Not what are your deficits, you know. But, what are your strengths? Instead of always focusing, and this is a teacher tendency I think is to focus on the problems and the difficulties. You know she wasn't interested in this. She was always more interested in what can you do and what are you doing with what you can do and how is that going?

She talked a great deal in the interview about the importance to her and those with whom she works of this aspect of their approach to offering assistance to urban public school teachers. She gives an example of how this approach worked with one teacher:

Say you came into a classroom and language arts was a weakness. You knew nothing about reading, nothing about developing writing or developing creative writing. But you came with a powerful art skill. A lot of talent in art, a lot of different techniques. O.K. It's just the most natural thing in the world and somebody just needs to say it to you for it to spark stuff, that it's natural to talk about art, you know. You talk about how, you talk about what, you talk about why, where and the whole thing. It's all language. Then it's no problem to translate a spoken language into written language. And then into read language. That whole kind of continuum. And so before you know, in a few years that teacher has a powerful language arts program out of her arts program. Just a natural component. Natural expression. But also she's given something to the class with integrity. Her real power has been released. Let's say it was the art. The children are getting something of importance because the teacher really can see...

To offer assistance of this nature requires knowledge and experience on the part of the assister. No rote techniques are useful. Assisters must work creatively to find a match between the recipients' needs and their own offerings.

During one of our interviews two assisters explained their view of the different kinds of help that teachers request. Rather than thinking of them as more or less able to take in and use

information and assistance, they see people as embedded in more and less favorable institutional climates and as being developmentally in different places with regard to the ideas which their group promotes. The more experienced assister of the two put it this way:

That's a developmental question. It depends on the school. You could be giving a lot to a teacher. The teacher could be receiving a lot. Just like a child. And then not produce this year. But next year they might or the year after. I don't think there's any predictability about that. There's no cause and effect relationship with teachers or dialogues...

Another assister, listening to her, added:

...it's a developmental thing just the way we feel children grow and learn...you take something in and internalize it and take some time to actually put it into practice and everybody has a different rate...

Their positive regard for the recipients of their work is based on a Piagetian view of experience. They expect and readily allow space for cognitive adaptation. They accept the ongoing structure of a teacher's thinking and expect that development, whatever its pace, is occurring among teachers who have asked for their assistance. The degree to which these processes occur is directly related to the presence of mutual adaptation and of actual use of learnings. But all of these processes take place within schools and school systems and those collectivities have considerable influence upon the dyadic or small group processes which take place within them. We turn to experiences with collectivities among the several sites next.

Collective influences on experiences

Reports of the experiences of these several sites provide information about certain forms of collective influence: the core group of staff who receive information and assistance, the Principals who exercise leadership in schools where staff members are being offered information, and the district or system level administration which controls funding for programs. Mutual adaptation processes are considerably affected by the nature of support or lack thereof from the collectivity of which recipients are a part.

Most of the technical assistance groups reported efforts to work with a core group of staff. Much of the work with staff of the school within a school (site 2) was done in training sessions in which an explicit purpose was to deal with issues of morale, group cohesion, and teamwork as well as with substantive educational issues. The Director of the group which offered a management-by-objectives approach to the solution of educational problems (site 7) took care to work with the natural leaders in each school, to have the school staff members themselves select leaders for project activities, and to encourage teachers to work together. The effective consultant to the experimental high school which emphasized collaborative decision making among its various participants (site 9) describes how, although his work was begun with a group of staff who took one of his university courses, the collective process rather than the course content made the difference:

It wasn't just the Directions Course. It was that the course had a responsibility. This was a cadre of people and they had to reach out and touch everybody else in the school. So it wasn't just an elitist group. It was a group operating as the linkage people with the rest of the school. So whatever their identified constituency would be, the idea was not to leave anybody out. Even if somebody was a nonparticipant, somebody had the responsibility to go out and touch that person and get a reaction from him even if it was an "I'm not interested."

Knowing their own school well, knowing the needs and interests of the other teachers, they could frame assistance so that it could be useful and used.

Working with a core group of teachers was part of the explicit strategy of the university based group which offered assistance on the development of open educational teaching approaches.

(site 8) Karunakaran, the site researcher writes:

The Learning Community Program would identify the new community, within which each classroom in turn would function as a subcommunity, in this way eliminating the isolation of teacher from teacher, class from class, and children from one another...(1978: 71).

Leaders of this assistance group have as a purpose helping to provide structures which support teachers in their development. These supportive groups consist of teachers at different levels of development with regard to open education. Karunakaran describes how these groups are used:

...apprenticeship relations between more experienced and less experienced teachers...appear to be fostered through subtle means rather than through a formal designation of who is the teacher and who is the one to be taught. Instead, an assister may suggest to a teacher who is looking for specific help, e.g., with teaching computation in her class: "Well, here are some ideas, but you know, the person you should really ask is (a teacher). She is a whiz at

math and she is really good at coming up with suggestions about number games. I am sure she will let you look at some of the games she has developed (1978: 80).

In their work with teachers they offer specific help but they also work to set up, insofar as possible, a "community" of teachers who can support and learn from each other. Supportive groups are formed wherever possible within the schools. They are also provided in the laboratory center at the university as a substitute for lacking support structures within the schools and a rich supplement to those already existing. Learning communities within schools have at least one formal meeting each week, meetings in which individual adaptation of information is modeled and supported.

The next level of potentially supportive collectivity is local administrative support which usually means the principal and his activities vis á vis information and assistance offerings and use. (See Hyde, 1978 for a fuller consideration of the effects of principals on educational change efforts.) In two sites the project leaders became principals of the schools within which they were doing their work and thereby gained a much freer opportunity to accomplish their intended work. In most of the sites the progress of the work was considerably affected by the nature of the principal's support or lack thereof.

When one of the leaders in the development of organizational development in-service programs for teachers became principal of the school (site 6) he was more able to apply that approach and also the approach of educational humanism to the entire work of the school. He provided, to the degree to which he had the

power to control it, budgetary support to this work within the school.

Before the director of the experimental high school which emphasized collaborative decision making (site 9) became principal of the whole school, his innovative efforts were confined to the section of the school over which he exercised leadership. Contrasting the work he was able to do once he became principal, the project director said:

We didn't have the support from the principal or money. You need more than just to say open classroom and they became very discouraged. I didn't have those resources then that I had when I became principal and saw all those resources that could have helped. What happened was they became discouraged...They spent their own money. The principal didn't want us to succeed and didn't give them any funds.

His view was echoed in the words of the project consultant who sees this principal's experience as a classic example of the necessity of having a principal's support to accomplish innovative work within schools.

The organization of business people who provide organizational development consultation to people in schools give formal recognition to role of the principal in the success of their work. Davis, the site researcher, describes their approach in the following way:

...conceptualized the role of the principal as that of facilitator; that is, the principal is seen as a leader whose behavior should foster the effective involvement of the total school community in the identification of problems and the working out of solutions to those problems.

...The principals in both documentation schools showed a great deal of concern for the success of the projects, have been supportive of the ...process, and have shown sophistication in converting resources to desired ends. Both principals exhibited aggressiveness in keeping staff energies focused on educational issues resulting in the stimulation of teacher activity in (these) schools (1978: 160).

Davis's case study (site 1) provides examples of the principals doing such things as convening meetings of teachers to facilitate the practice of such programs as peer advising.

The project director of the assistance group which offered management-by-objectives techniques to public school staff members (site 7) always initiated activities within schools with the principal. She was quoted in the case study as saying:

You can't function in the building without working closely with the principal. He needs the skills that you're going to be working with his staff on ...he needs to be one step ahead of them. If he's not, he can make the situation impossible (Simon, 1978: 94).

Simon supplements the director's statement with her own observation:

In her role (the director) endeavored to support and strengthen leadership. She arranges for the principal to become the MBO expert in the eyes of the school staff. It is also important to work through the principal since he is the official leader of the school. At a school like (school name), where the principal is recognized as the central authority in the school, the cooperation of the school staff in project activities had to be secured through the principal. Efforts of the first project director provide an illustration. The site coordinator, chosen by the project director, rather than the principal, was invisible to (the school) staff. Other teachers at (the school) were unaware that there existed a site coordinator. A second illustration comes out of the first project director's efforts to involve teachers in project activities. (The principal) de-

clined to help the first project director, but he gave her the go-ahead to try her own tactics. She called teachers during the summer to arrange a meeting in early August. Although she invested many hours of time talking to teachers on the phone and getting them to agree to attend the meeting, only one teacher of a faculty of 95 showed up.

Such is the considerable power of the principal in some circumstances.

The university based group which offers open education assistance to teachers in schools as well as in its own center also provides examples of the positive effects of the principal's support on the work. Karunakaran (1978: 139) cites numerous instances of the value of the principal's support to the ongoing progress of the work:

Well, I think you have to have the support of the administration. And we have more than just support. We have an administrator who is innovative and really knows a lot about children and how they learn. Without his support we never would have done so well. We had to have the parents' support and the administration support and we had to have the...support (of the group of experienced assisters at the laboratory center).

Principals sometimes support alternative educational approaches which are incongruent with open education. A project staff person describes that kind of situation:

If you have four to five teachers really interested you have a base to develop a community relationship. However, a principal needs to allow it. He's key, even to allow it. But if he doesn't have the energy or he is not committed enough to really make it spread...Also the educational priorities, the way he announces them to a school...If a principal is talking to a staff constantly about the reading scores, that's not a place where these ideas are going to necessarily grow.

The principal controls more than financial resources. The

priorities he sets for his staffs' work can support or undermine the educational programs they are building.

The project which worked to increase teachers' participation in local school decision making through the formation of faculty councils and school constitutions (site 3), under its initial condition of not involving principals in the process, was slow and ineffective in getting teachers to work on drafting constitutions. When principals were involved, the work moved along more effectively. Clark, the site researcher, reports (1978: 98) that central district administrators felt that principals "would have to be involved in (the project) to make it work." . He reviews in the case study other reasons for the decision to involve the principal:

The other reason for the central office review of the constitution was to "assure the principals that they were doing all right." The principals had to feel that they could give up some or all of their decision making power and the only place from which they felt secure in receiving approval for that would be the central office (Clark, 1978: 98).

This involvement of the principals came about through the central office and illustrates the essential integration of all parts of the system when major and effective new work is to be undertaken. Although this project had the support of central office administrators from its beginning, it did not really function within the schools until the principals support was secured.

These case examples show the experience of members of several school change efforts with using or requiring principal's support to accomplish their work. When principals truly support the work they provide financial and programatic resources which ease

the progress of the work considerably. An important aspect of this support is the way in which the principal's adaptation of and to the new information or practice models and encourages a similar adaptation process on the part of other school staff members. Project Directors who became principals were in the best positions to do this, but other principals who encouraged the work also provided a helpful environment.

Four of the sites provide information of the role of the central administration in furthering or hindering the work of the assistance groups within urban public schools. Davis (1978: 177) reports on the positive effects of the reassurance provided by a central administrator who, during a time of financial cutbacks, expressed his "desire to have the (project) effort expand to all 100 high schools in the city." It was efforts at the district level that provided the funds for the humanistic education work within the school and the surrounding community (site 6) in one urban area, although much of their later efforts were to fight attempts by district administration to terminate their program (Brown and Hyde, 1978: 67,96). Lack of district or central administrative support severely limited the funds which were available to the school within a school project (site 2). Paoli, the site researcher, writes:

This and a number of subsequent Board actions were to demonstrate exactly where the power to enact change in the educational system really lay, and each time such a decision was made it served to narrow the possibility of the community corporation ever really attaining "control" (1978: 55).

She continues, explaining how in the midst of the system-wide financial crisis, lacking district level support their position was unprotected:

Funds for the project were also in jeopardy. The Board felt that they could save money if they funded (the school) under the funding formula that is used for most city schools instead of the ...contract which involved "loose funds" managed by the community corporation...Negotiations around this issue lasted over three months, and ended in a renewal of the contract, but with a cut of more than half in real funds.

There are, of course, limitless ways in which central administrative bodies and officials can limit the work of particular programs by limiting their access to funds and other essential resources. And in so doing, they engage would-be innovators efforts with responding to their threats rather than in promoting the substantive work of their educational programs.

Certainly skill at managing the often difficult relationships with central administrative bodies is essential to the success of educational change programs. One of the staff members of the university based open education assistance group (site 8) gives an example of their project director's skill:

...had to come up against the bureaucracy of the ...city school system, and when we talked about having corridor activities she had a tremendous opposition in the custodial staff and their way out would be: "Well, the fire regulations do not permit us to have a chair in the corridor. What if there's a fire?" (She said,) "We'll bring them in." She would measure the space. She did a real educational job in addition to a propaganda job and in addition to a PR job and actually had to work with the fire department chiefs, the bureaus in the city, in order to gain approval.

"Nothing on the walls in the corridor." "Why not?" "They're a hazard." "Why?" "Things will be on the floor." So what's the solution? We could put things on the corridor walls but we had to tape it down flat on all four sides. That's great because it stays up better that way anyway. We spent a lot of money on tape.

Such stories are part of the folklore of this group. But the site researcher, Karunakaran (1978: 105, 111), also reports instances where parents were able to receive funds and other support for participation in programs related to the project from the central administrative office. Central administrative officials have the power to make or break, to ease or impede the work of assistance groups and school staff members who are seeking to change ongoing educational programs. They provide a distant yet important environment in which mutual adaptation of outside information and of inside experience sometimes, but rarely, occur.

Mutual Adaptation: Lessons from Several Groups.

Several case examples have shown many failures and a few startling successes in the efforts of many hard working and well motivated individuals within and without urban public schools. What seems at first glance to be a simple process: the introduction of previously and potentially useful information to practitioners in educational systems which are in desperate need of improvement, turn out to be complex and likely to fail.

Why did failure of such estimable goals and interests happen in the case examples we have reviewed? Often it was because the most basic resources for mutual adaptation were missing. In one project after another offerers and recipients of outside information did not truly have a clear view of the other, as people

and as people they ought to respect and listen to, and did not truly perceive the information each was offering or could offer to the other. These often unproductive processes were true of individual offerers and recipients and of the groups of like situated individuals of which they were a part. And this problematic basis of perception of relevant social and informational objects is the very starting point for the mutual adaptation process.

Once there is mutual perception and acceptance, then the adaptation work begins. Then the individuals and collectivities, both offerers and recipients, must take in the new information and practices and change their structures to accord them a space.

There is a contrast among the several sites between those with a primary focus of offering a particular kind of assistance they consider valuable to people in schools and those which couple their usual approach to assistance with constant attention to the felt needs of the recipients. Whenever, in these case examples, a disjunction between felt needs and offerings occurred, the assistance work was stopped until needs and offerings came together again. Assistance groups which built into their daily work great attention to and respect for the needs and perspectives of recipients and whose work permitted them to pay positive attention to teachers' issues did not find their work stopped so readily as did sites which considered teachers' own

agendae to be impediments to their work.

If the offerers are appropriately knowledgeable and the knowledge they offer is potentially useful to recipients, then the work will consist in their mutual interaction to work out changes on both their parts. Collectivities, whether composed of the adaptors or of those who surround them and have power over their activities, can offer significant support to individual adaptation processes, rendering them more effective in the application of new approaches to educational practice.

This, then, is the picture we have constructed from the literature and from the experiences of several groups in and around public schools in several large cities in this country. Ongoing individual and collective processes, both psychological and interactional, consist of patterns and structures which give necessary form and meaning to experience. New information and new practices don't just get superficially added on to ongoing ways. Or, to the extent to which they do, they are superficial in their effects. Adoption of new ways of thinking and of behaving take psychological and interactional work, work which we, following and generalizing from Piaget, conceptualize as consisting of assimilation and accommodation between and among various sets of individuals and collectivities. This work is mutual adaptation and where it occurs the thinking and observable behavior of the interacting entities will be changed.

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